

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:16 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Nancy-Ann Min DeParle, Administrator, Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA); and Edna Shalala, mother of Health and Human Services Secretary Donna E. Shalala.

Statement on Signing Legislation on Funding for the Disposition of Depleted Uranium Hexafluoride

July 21, 1998

Today I have signed into law S. 2316, a bill designed to help ensure that certain funds of the United States Enrichment Corporation will be dedicated to the disposition of depleted uranium hexafluoride. I strongly support this bill, but note that by virtue of the Recommendations Clause of the Constitution, Article II, section 3, the Congress may not require the President to recommend legislation to the Congress. Therefore, to the extent the bill would infringe upon my discretion to determine whether to recommend legislation to the Congress, I must treat it as hortatory. In this case, however, I believe that the development of proposed legislation by the Secretary of Energy furthers important and valuable objectives, and I intend to instruct the Secretary to develop proposed legislation for inclusion in my budget request for fiscal year 2000.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
July 21, 1998.

NOTE: S. 2316, approved July 21, was assigned Public Law No. 105-204.

Message to the House of Representatives Returning Without Approval the "Education Savings and School Excellence Act of 1998"

July 21, 1998

To the House of Representatives:

I am returning herewith without my approval H.R. 2646, the "Education Savings and School Excellence Act of 1998."

As I have said before, we must prepare our children for the 21st century by provid-

ing them with the best education in the world. To help meet this goal, I have sent the Congress a comprehensive agenda for strengthening our public schools, which enroll almost 90 percent of our students. My plan calls for raising standards, strengthening accountability, and promoting charter schools and other forms of public school choice. It calls for reducing class size in the early grades, so our students get a solid foundation in the basic skills, modernizing our schools for the 21st century, and linking them with the Internet. And we must strengthen teaching and provide students who need additional help with tutoring, mentoring, and after-school programs. We must take these steps now.

By sending me this bill, the Congress has instead chosen to weaken public education and shortchange our children. The modifications to the Education IRAs that the bill would authorize are bad education policy and bad tax policy. The bill would divert limited Federal resources away from public schools by spending more than \$3 billion on tax benefits that would do virtually nothing for average families and would disproportionately benefit the most affluent families. More than 70 percent of the benefits would flow to families in the top 20 percent of income distribution, and families struggling to make ends meet would never see a penny of the benefits. Moreover, the bill would not create a meaningful incentive for families to increase their savings for educational purposes; it would instead reward families, particularly those with substantial incomes, for what they already do.

The way to improve education for all our children is to increase standards, accountability, and choice within the public schools. Just as we have an obligation to repair our Nation's roads and bridges and invest in the infrastructure of our transportation system, we also have an obligation to invest in the infrastructure needs of our public schools. I urge the Congress to meet that obligation and to send me instead the legislation I have proposed to reduce class size; improve the quality of teaching; modernize our schools; end social promotions; raise academic standards;